

Family Involvement

Session Type: Power Session
2/10/2013, 1:30 PM - 2:10 PM



Kathy Brill, MEd, MPS

Executive Director
Parent to Parent USA

Kathy Brill, Executive Director of Parent to Parent USA, and previous Director of Parent to Parent of PA, holds master's degrees in both Education, with emphasis on Special Education, and Political Management with emphasis on Grassroots Networking. She is also a member of the National Advisory Board on Improving Health Care Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities, and served as Chair for PA's State Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention. She is mom to three daughters, her youngest, age 23, was born 3 months premature and now uses lots of assistive technology and other supports as she leads her own self-directed life in college. Parent to Parent support has been a lifeline for Kathy and her husband throughout their journey as they learned to navigate new stressors, obstacles and systems, beginning with their first Support Parent in the NICU. They now give back as Support Parents to other families.



Joni Bruce, BS

Executive Director
Oklahoma Family Network

Joni Bruce is Executive Director of The Oklahoma Family Network, Oklahoma's Parent-to-Parent and Family-to-Family Health Care Resource and Education Center for families of children with special health care needs. Joni received her B.S. from Oklahoma State University with a major in Marketing and minor in Biology. She is a graduate of Partners in Policymaking and Resolve Through Sharing grief counselor training. She is mother of one child who died due to a genetic disorder after 2 month stay in a NICU and 2 other children (one adopted). Both of her living children have been diagnosed with chronic health issues requiring services from multiple medical professionals and the school system. Joni began her work with the Neonatal Parents Network shortly after its creation. Joni is responsible for the overall management of The Oklahoma Family Network, fundraising, grant writing, and develops partnerships with agencies, hospitals and others in the state who serve those with special needs.



Heather Smith, MPH

Health Planning Consultant
Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Mrs. Smith has worked in the health care field in some capacity since she was 16 years old. Beginning in a family physician office, moving to a hospital outpatient surgery unit and then to home health and inpatient care on a transitional care unit throughout college. Upon graduation in 2006, Mrs. Smith served in various roles with Children's Miracle Network in Springfield, MO. In 2009, Mrs. Smith graduated from Missouri State University with a Master's in Public Health. She began working for the Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) as the Project Coordinator for the D-70 Integrated Community Systems for Youth with Special Health Care Needs grant. In October 2011, Mrs. Smith was promoted to the Health Planning Consultant position within the same program. Mrs. Smith serves on many disability-related advisory councils and is a fellow of the Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute.

Kayzy Bigler

Information Specialist/Parent-to-Parent Coordinator
Families Together, Inc.

Kayzy is an Information Specialist/Parent-to-Parent Coordinator for the Families Together's Topeka Center. She joined Families Together in December of 2008. She comes to us with 14 years' experience in Early Childhood Special Education in both the ESCS preschool setting, and Community Inclusion. She also did ABA therapy as a contract employee for the school district for two years. Her focus for Families Together is on outreach to families and to the Local Interagency Coordinating Councils in North Eastern Kansas. She really enjoys connecting families together through the Parent-to-Parent program so they can receive the emotional support from another parent who can say "I've been there". Mrs. Bigler is the liaison to the Title V program and the coordinator of the Family CYSHCN Family Advisory Council. Kayzy has two children with disabilities, so she understands firsthand how important that emotional support can be.



Donna Yadrich, MPA, CCRP

Family Advisory Member
Kansas CYSHCN Family Advisory Council

Donna is a member of the CYSHCN Family Advisory Council and has served as the leader of the medical home work group. Donna, as a mother of a child with a special health care need, has ample experience in working with the health care delivery system and hospitals related to the care of her child. Professionally, Donna has worked in multiple positions related to health care research since 1987 with the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, KS. Donna holds a Bachelor of Science from Kansas State University and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Additionally, Donna is a certified Clinical Research Professional (CCRP).

